

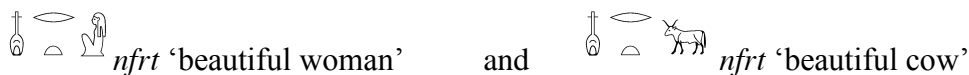
Paratextual signs in Egyptian texts of the Old and Middle Kingdoms

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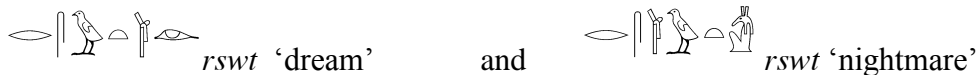
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Introduction

The concept of ‘paratext’, as popularised by the French literary theorist Gérard Genette,¹ is an extremely broad one, and encompasses anything pertaining to a text that is not actually the text created by the author. However, the concept of the paratextual *sign* is rather narrower, denoting specifically the use of visual devices (marks, punctuation, diacritics etc.) to modify the meaning conveyed by the basic sign set of a given textual system. This paper, in keeping with the spirit of the conference that produced it, focuses on paratextual signs in this narrower sense.² A fundamental issue in identifying Egyptian paratextuality at the level of the sign is the logophonetic nature of the Egyptian script which makes systematic use of non-phonetic signs, showing a significant degree of variability that can affect meaning; a well-known illustration of this point would be:



These are both writings of the same lexeme, which merely indicates a female beautiful thing, while the non-phonetic final sign (the determinative) in each case provides extra non-phonetic information (namely, what sort of female beautiful thing is being referred to).³ Another classic illustration of the same point can be found in



where the ‘ordinary’ determinative of the eye for the lexeme *rswt* is replaced in one instance by the determinative of the unruly god Seth, indicating a rather more chaotic and disturbing nocturnal vision.⁴ Since the use of non-phonetic signs such as determinatives (as in the

¹G. Genette, *Seuils* (Paris, 1987).

² In keeping with this focus, the paper will not consider in detail broader paratextual issues which are particularly prominent in studies of Egyptian religious texts, such as ancient text titles, ancient commentaries and glosses to texts, and directions as to performative actions undertaken to accompany the text as it is recited. See H. M. Hays, *The Organization of the Pyramid Texts: Typology and Disposition* (PdÄ 31; Leiden, 2012), 1-16 for a summary of the information that can be gleaned from these broader paratextual indicators, in Egyptian religious tradition. On commentary in the Coffin Texts, see U. Rößler-Köhler, ‘Text oder Kommentar: zur Frage von Textkommentaren im vorgriechischen Ägypten’, in J. Assmann and B. Gladigow (eds), *Text und Kommentar* (Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation 4; Munich, 1995), 111-139.

³ A. H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar* (3rd edn.; Oxford, 1957), §48.

⁴ See A. McDonald, ‘An Evil Influence? Seth’s Role as a Determinative, Particularly in Letters to the Dead’, *Lingua Aegyptia* 10 (2002), 283-291. While it is thus clear that, to some extent and in certain cases, a measure of choice existed in terms of a scribe’s use of determinatives, the degree to which such choices were open for every lexeme is rather more debatable; see A. Loprieno, ‘Is the Egyptian Hieroglyphic Determinative Chosen or Prescribed?’, in L. Morra and C. Bazzanella (eds), *Philosophers and Hieroglyphs* (Turin, 2003), 237-250.

examples above) and ideograms/logograms⁵ was, from the earliest periods, a core part of the Egyptian writing system,⁶ they can hardly be considered ‘paratextual signs’ in the narrow sense outlined above.⁷

Careful attention also needs to be paid to the existence, almost from the very beginning of Egyptian writing,⁸ of two non-identical systems, hieroglyphs (largely monumental, largely carved or painted) and hieratic (less invested with monumentality, and primarily written with a reed pen, in ink, on papyrus and ostraca). Although very closely related in their underlying principles, in terms of the appearance of their individual graphemes these two scripts diverge very early on, as a result of their mode of creation, and their intended functional context.⁹ More importantly, however, hieratic quickly diverges from hieroglyphs in ways that preclude an automatic 1:1 equivalence substitution between the two scripts. This is true at both a graphemic¹⁰ and orthographic¹¹ level, and it has implications for e.g. varying patterns of usage of determinatives between the two systems.

Both scripts demonstrate variability, in style and level of detail in execution of graphemes, that complicates the identification of paratextuality. Hieroglyphs can be simplified for writing on papyrus (‘cursive hieroglyphs’), but at the other end of the spectrum, in the monumental sphere, there was wide potential to encode extra non-linguistic information by addition of specific incidental details to elaborately wrought individual hieroglyphic signs (particularly ideograms and determinatives).¹² There is rather less evidence for this phenomenon in

⁵ This paper does not focus on the problem of categorising the various types of hieroglyphic and hieratic grapheme, and so retains the old-fashioned (but easily understood) terms for these non-phonetic script elements. For a more nuanced overview, see S. Polis and S. Rosmorduc, ‘The Hieroglyphic Sign Functions: Suggestions for a Revised Taxonomy’, in H. Amstutz, A. Dorn, M. Müller, M. Ronsdorf, and S. Uljas (eds), *Fuzzy Boundaries: Festschrift für Antonio Loprieno* (Hamburg, 2015), I, 149-174.

⁶ For ideograms, see J. Kahl, *Das System der ägyptischen Hieroglyphenschrift in der 0-3. Dynastie* (GOF IV/29; Wiesbaden, 1994), 59; for determinatives, *ibid.*, 105-113. For detailed tabulations of early sign forms, see I. Regulski, *A Palaeographic Study of Early Writing in Egypt* (OLA 195; Leuven, 2010).

⁷ No less problematic is the often blurry boundary between text and image in Egyptian culture. For an early example, see C. Dochniak, ‘An Early First Dynasty Adaptation of the *nar* Hieroglyph to the Smiting Posture as a Possible Precursor to Hieroglyph A24’, *Varia Aegyptiaca* 7 (1991), 101-107. See also J. Baines, ‘On Functions of Writing in Ancient Egyptian Pictorial Representation’, in P. Taylor (ed.), *Iconography without Texts* (Warburg Institute Colloquia 12; London, 2008), 99-107.

⁸ I. Regulski, ‘The Beginning of Hieratic Writing in Egypt’, *SAK* 38 (2009), 259-274, describes a clear trajectory of increasing cursiveness in ink inscriptions from the Naqada III period to the Second Dynasty. In the case of many signs, this trajectory can be seen to anticipate the hieratic of the Old Kingdom.

⁹ Notwithstanding this divergence, it should also be noted that there exists some degree of gradation between the two scripts, with many ‘hieraticising’ monumental hieroglyphic texts, for example. For a discussion of this issue in a later time period, see E. Graefe, ‘Über den parallelen Gebrauch von hieroglyphischen, kursivhieroglyphischen und hieratischen Schriftzeichen in Totentexten’, in U. Verhoeven (ed.), *Ägyptologische “Binsen”-Weisheiten I-II: Neue Forschungen und Methoden der Hieratistik* (Mainz, 2015), 119-142.

¹⁰ Most straightforwardly, multiple distinct hieroglyphic graphemes (such as the various arm signs, GSL D36, D37, D38, D39, D40) can to greater or lesser degrees be simplified in hieratic into a single grapheme (D36); conversely, hieratic often possesses fuller and more abbreviated possibilities for writing a grapheme that has only one standard hieroglyphic form (e.g. the uniconsonantal *m*, GSL G17); see J. Baines, ‘Scripts, High Culture, and Administration in Middle Kingdom Egypt’, in S. Houston (ed.), *The Shape of Script: How and why Writing Systems Change* (Santa Fe, 2012), 58.

¹¹ As the more functional of the two scripts, hieratic orthography is also the more regular, whereas the more decorative function of hieroglyphs encourages more variability.

¹² A rather esoteric example of this is in the deliberate modification of graphemes for religious/ritual reasons, most obviously in the sporadic phenomenon of ‘mutilated hieroglyphs’, where graphemes representing humans

hieratic, where the degree of awareness by scribes of the ‘iconicity’ of the individual graphemes used is debatable,¹³ though at least for the earliest periods it is plausible that the pictorial origins of many signs remained fairly easy to intuit. Instead, hieratic exhibits other kinds of graphemic variability (between the hands of individual scribes, and over time), and it also comes to develop distinct writing styles for different kinds of text, so that by the Middle Kingdom there is a clear distinction between a more cursive documentary hand, and a more elaborate ‘literary’ one. Thus, the choice of hieratic script variant operated as a kind of paratextual indicator at a whole-text level.

Format, usage, and correction

A small number of paratextual signs is apparent almost from the inception of the writing in Egypt, most obviously in the use of the *serekh* device (and later the cartouche) to separate off royal names from surrounding text.¹⁴ Beyond this, earlier Egyptian is in general comparatively sparing in the use of explicit paratextual *signs*: instead, text formatting and layout seem to have been the primary way of conveying extra, non-linguistic information to the reader. Even the earliest inscriptions tend to make use of ruled lines to mark off discrete sections of text,¹⁵ and, as directionality in reading hieroglyphs became established,¹⁶ dividing lines between columns and lines of text remained extremely common. This is also true for hieratic, as is evident from the earliest surviving inscribed papyri from the mid-fourth dynasty from Wadi el-Jarf.¹⁷ From the Old Kingdom, the use of columns could become more complex in both hieroglyphs and hieratic: where certain phrases or phrase components recurred in close proximity with only minor variation, a full-width column could be partially split into two by another column divider, so that the varying elements could be written out side by side, while the common elements could be written in the undivided part of the column; the reader would then read out both complete phrases.¹⁸

and animals are altered to avoid the signs posing a magical threat to the user of the text. Such signs can be ‘mutilated’ by being only partially written (so, for example, just a pair of hands holding a stick, rather than a whole person holding the stick), or by being written discontinuously, with the head separated from the body so that the sign appears to have had its head ‘cut off’; another possibility, for noxious animals like snakes, is to execute the sign in full, but to add a series of knives ‘stabbing’ it. See J. Winand and V. Angenot, ‘L’image égyptienne peut-elle nier?’, in S. Badir and M. G. Dondero (eds), *L’image égyptienne peut-elle nier?* (Liège, 2016), 165. For the Second Intermediate Period, see G. Miniaci, ‘The Incomplete Hieroglyphs System at the end of the Middle Kingdom’, *RdE* 61 (2010), 113–134.

¹³ See W. Schenkel, ‘Wie ikonisch ist die altägyptische Schrift?’, *Lingua Aegyptia* 19 (2011), 125–153.

¹⁴ A. Jiménez-Serrano, ‘Chronology and Local Traditions: The Representation of Power and the Royal Name in the Late Predynastic period’, *Archéo-Nil* 13 (2003), 93–142.

¹⁵ C. J. Eyre, *The Use of Documents in Pharaonic Egypt* (Oxford, 2013), 42.


¹⁶ Inversion of directionality can also be significant, both at a phrasal and lexemic level, such as in ‘honorific transposition’, and also at a whole text level, as with retrograde writing order (where pointed signs ‘face’ into the direction of writing); see R. S. Simpson, ‘Retrograde Writing in Ancient Egyptian Inscriptions’, in R. Jasnow and G. Widmer (eds), *Illuminating Osiris: Egyptological Studies in Honor of Mark Smith* (Atlanta, 2017), 337–345.

¹⁷ P. Tallet, *Les papyrus de la mer Rouge, I: Le "journal de Merer" (Papyrus Jarf A et B)* (MIFAO 136; Cairo, 2017).

¹⁸ On split columns, see E. Edel, *Altägyptische Grammatik* (Rome, 1955), §89.

Other modes of organisational format are also shared in common between hieroglyphic and hieratic texts, such as tabulation, and the use of squared/rectangular grids. These are found both in administrative papyri,¹⁹ and in monumental contexts, such as in royal annals,²⁰ and tabulated offering lists found in elite tombs.²¹ The use of vertical vs. horizontal text orientation was combined in Old Kingdom administrative contexts, such as royal decrees, to separate details of sender/recipient from message content.²² In the later Middle Kingdom, a similar (though opposite) opposition of vertical and horizontal is used in private and administrative letters too.²³ Another important aspect of format is the use of empty space: name lists throughout Egyptian history have a habit of separating out the man and woman determinatives from the names of individuals listed, and aligning them to the left in a neat column separated from the individuals' names by variable amounts of blank space.²⁴ This presumably was an aid to tallying. A more literary/liturgical use of blank space can be found in, for example, the *Hymns to Senwosret III* from Lahun,²⁵ which are framed in stanzas that begin with repeated anaphoric refrains. Each stanza occupies a single horizontal line, with the refrains written out only at their first occurrence. Subsequent lines with subsequent stanzas leave a blank space where the repeated refrain should be, clearly implying that the refrain given in the first line needs to be repeated.

For hieratic, the use of different colours of ink (red and black) as a text organisational device is implied from some of the earliest surviving instances of the scribal equipment hieroglyph

GSL Y4 () showing two cakes of ink,²⁶ and the Wadi el-Jarf papyri show a full use of red and black ink.²⁷ Black is the default colour, while red can be used to highlight the start of new sections of text (and titles of e.g. spells and medicinal recipes).²⁸ The alternation of red and black also acts as a text divider, aiding navigation through what is otherwise largely *scriptio*

¹⁹ E.g. Tallet, *Les papyrus de la mer Rouge I*.

²⁰ See J. Baines, 'On the Evolution, Purpose, and Forms of Egyptian Annals', in E.-M. Engel, V. Müller, and U. Hartung (eds), *Zeichen aus dem Sand: Streiflichter aus Ägyptens Geschichte zu Ehren von Günter Dreyer* (Wiesbaden, 2008), 19-40. The compartmentalisation of each year's data within a box delimited by the hieroglyphic sign for 'year' (*rnpt*), such as in the Palermo stone, also adds an extra paratextual message.

²¹ A. Morales, 'Iteration, Innovation und Dekor in Opferlisten des Alten Reichs: Zur Vorgeschichte der Pyramidentexte', *ZÄS* 142 (2015), 55-69.

²² Eyre, *Use of Documents*, 14, and 89-94; see also W. Helck, *Altägyptische Aktenkunde des 3. und 2. Jahrtausends v. Chr.* (MÄS 31; Munich, 1974), 10-38.

²³ See examples in M. Collier and S. Quirke, *The UCL Lahun Papyri: Letters* (BAR IS 1083; Oxford, 2002), where details of sender and addressee are typically given in a vertical column at right, with the rest of the message continuing in horizontal lines to the left.

²⁴ A well-known example is the household census P. UC 32163: M. Collier and S. Quirke, *The UCL Lahun Papyri: Religious, Literary, Legal, Mathematical and Medical* (BAR IS 1209; Oxford, 2004), 110-111. The Ramesseum Ostrakon, from the 13th dynasty, uses a similar layout, with determinatives separated from their lexemes, so that they form a distinct column of signs: see A. H. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica* (Oxford, 1947), pls 1 and 3-4.

²⁵ Collier and Quirke, *The UCL Lahun Papyri: Religious*, 16-17.

²⁶ G. Posener, 'Sur l'emploi de l'encre rouge dans les manuscrits égyptiens', *JEA* 37 (1951), 76.

²⁷ E.g. Tallet, *Les papyrus de la mer Rouge I*, pl. 3 (papyrus A [A2-A5]), where a vertical column divider in red marks off the end of a ten-day week, and where a rubric occurs in the middle of one of the columns.

²⁸ Posener, *JEA* 37, 77. The text divisions created by rubrics in New Kingdom literary manuscripts appear sometimes to reflect the compositional structure of the Middle Kingdom text, as with the 40 divisions within the *Tale of Sinuhe*: J. Assmann, 'Die Rubren in der Überlieferung der Sinuhe-Erzählung', in M. Görg (ed.), *Fontes atque pontes: Eine Festgabe für Hellmut Brunner* (Wiesbaden, 1983), 18-41.

continua. More importantly, in Middle Kingdom administrative papyri, the two cereal staples (emmer wheat and barley) could be succinctly distinguished by the numerical amounts simply being written in red and black, respectively.²⁹ The use of red to mark later textual emendations in black text (and vice versa) should be noted,³⁰ as indeed should the use of both red and black ‘check marks’ on hieratic administrative papyri to count off items and personnel.³¹ These check marks are, however, hardly paratextual, but are rather artefacts of the ongoing use of the text after its creation.



There is little evidence in the Old and Middle Kingdoms for technical paratextual signs relating to textual revision or correction: no crosses or asterisks, etc. This may relate to Egyptian attitudes toward the canonicity of the literary and religious texts that they were copying. Notwithstanding idealised notions of copying out a text ‘like what was found in writing’, as the Middle Kingdom version of the literary colophon states,³² it is clear that religious texts underwent repeated revision over the course of their transmission, and that literary texts also were subject to a relatively open transmission in the Middle Kingdom.³³ The late Middle Kingdom manuscripts of the *Tale of the Eloquent Peasant* papyri provide a good feel for the kinds of error that occurred in the transmission process, and how they were or were not picked up on by the copyists:³⁴



- uncorrected errors (e.g. *Eloquent Peasant* B1 342)
- erasure of errors (e.g. *Eloquent Peasant* B1 305; B2 82)
- erasure of errors, with overwriting by correct text (e.g. *Eloquent Peasant* B1 347)
- overwriting of error without erasure (e.g. *Eloquent Peasant* B1 203, 336, 337, 347, 352)
- corrective addition of sign(s) in free space within area of main text (e.g. *Eloquent Peasant* B1 251; Bt 14)³⁵

²⁹ J. Černý, *Paper and Books in Ancient Egypt* (London, 1952), 23; Helck, *Aktenkunde*, 60.

³⁰ This is more common in religious manuscripts, such as the Coffin Texts, as opposed to literary manuscripts, where corrections tend to be in the same colour as most of the rest of the text (black): Posener, *JEA* 37, 76-7.

³¹ Most often simple red/black dots/ticks; see examples in M. Collier and S. Quirke, *The UCL Lahun Papyri: Accounts* (BAR IS 1471; Oxford, 2006). Some papyri have much more complex sets of check marks, a good

example being P. Reisner I, where some individual hieroglyphic signs like  and  are clearly additional check marks (whose exact meaning remains debatable), while other marks cannot be clearly related to any hieroglyphic equivalent; see W. K. Simpson, *Papyrus Reisner I: The Records of a Building Project in the Reign of Sesostri I* (Boston, 1963), 24-25, 40-43, 53 n. 5. The late Middle Kingdom fugitive list P. Brooklyn 35.1446

uses  and  for *qn* ‘(case) complete’ and *ʿ3* ‘(fugitive now) here’ respectively; in both cases, the mark comprises most basic and abbreviated possible writing of the phonetic root of the relevant word. For a more general overview of single hieroglyphs of this sort used as administrative check marks, see Helck, *Aktenkunde*, 61-62.

³² See R. B. Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture in Middle Kingdom Egypt: A Dark Side to Perfection* (London, 2002), 75.

³³ On productive transmission, see J. Winand, ‘(Re)productive Tradition in Ancient Egyptian Language’, in T. Gillen (ed.), *(Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt: Proceedings of the conference held at the University of Liège, 6th-8th February 2013* (Liège, 2017), 20-25.

³⁴ For a helpful rendering into English of the state of the Berlin manuscripts of the *Eloquent Peasant*, see R. B. Parkinson, *Reading Ancient Egyptian Poetry: Among other Histories* (Chichester, 2009), 295-315.

³⁵ Bt 14 correction in red.

- corrective addition of sign(s) between columns/lines of text (e.g. *Eloquent Peasant* B1 40, 45; B2 100;³⁶ Bt 21, 37; R 3.7)

Beyond this group of papyri, there are examples where otiose/erroneous signs can be simply crossed or scribbled out.³⁷ If discrete sections of text threatened to run too close together on the ‘page’ and confuse the reader, a line could be drawn separating the two areas.³⁸ If scribes corrected themselves as they went along, it is difficult to detect, as wet ink can be wiped away more thoroughly. The errors highlighted above are therefore more likely the product of a read-through of the text after it had been completed. For Egyptian literary manuscripts in general, there is little evidence for a correctorial hand different from the copyist of the text,³⁹ implying that it is indeed mostly a scribal self-check with *ad hoc* emendation, rather than some more formal later process of editorial correction and/or collation.⁴⁰

Text division and enumeration

Beyond the *serekh* and the cartouche, it is not until the *Pyramid Texts* corpus that further explicitly paratextual *signs* are evident. This corpus generally comprises largely only the words spoken as part of the rituals it entextualises (plus indications of accompanying ritual items and actions),⁴¹ but even in the oldest extant set, from the pyramid of Unas, the vertical columns of hieroglyphs have sections divided off by a simple horizontal line that cuts across individual columns. In some cases, these horizontal lines serve to separate the words spoken from enumerations of accompanying ritual items,⁴² as, for example, in the ‘Offering Ritual’ found on the north wall of Unas’ sarcophagus chamber (Sethe’s PT utterances 23-171).⁴³ In these cases, the ritual item is (where possible) divided off at the bottom of a column from the preceding accompanying recitation text.⁴⁴ This can be seen as a development of the earlier


³⁶ Correction of undeleted main-text error.

³⁷ Again, this appears to be of a loose, *ad hoc*, nature, rather than representing a standardised cancellation mark. An example of this can be found at the end of CT spell 8 (CT I, 27a), where in B3B0 a red horizontal dividing line has been written, but subsequently crossed out, for reasons that are unclear.

³⁸ An early example of this occurs on the *Cairo Text on Linen*: A. H. Gardiner and K. Sethe, *Egyptian Letters to the Dead mainly from the Old and Middle Kingdoms* (London, 1928), pl. 1.

³⁹ See discussion in F. Hagen, *An Ancient Literary Text in Context: The Instruction of Ptahhotep* (Leuven, 2013), 97-98.

⁴⁰ It is, however, quite possible that a somewhat more rigorous attitude was taken with religious and technical treatises: copyists’ notations like *gm wš* ‘found defective/missing’, denoting illegibility or a lacuna in the text being copied out, are known from the early New Kingdom versions of the *Amduat*, and in the medical P. Ebers; these might conceivably have been in use earlier; see discussions in H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, ‘Die Arbeit am Text: Altägyptische Literaturwerke aus philologischer Perspektive’, in A. Loprieno (ed.), *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms* (Leiden, 1996), 501 n. 10, and Eyre, *Use of Documents*, 336-8. It is perhaps significant that

 alone is used as a check mark in a list of festival dancers at Lahun (P. UC 32191), presumably to indicate their absence (*wš*) on certain occasions: see M. Collier and S. Quirke, *The UCL Lahun Papyri: Accounts* (BAR IS 1471; Oxford, 2006), 92-95.


⁴¹ Hays, *Organization of the Pyramid Texts*, 257; see also Morales, *ZÄS* 142, 55-69.


⁴² See A. Grimm, ‘Titel und Vermerke in den Pyramidentexten’, *SAK* 13 (1986), 99-106.


⁴³ For this Pyramid Text sequence, see Hays, *Organization of the Pyramid Texts*, 81-92, 676-678; for a translation, see J. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (2nd edn; WAW 38; Atlanta, 2015), 21-30.

⁴⁴ However, the process of adaptation of the tabular format appears to have been somewhat delicate, as the PT utterances are of uneven length, and it was therefore not always possible to neatly place a ritual item at the

attested practice of tabulation of offering lists, such as the one from the tomb of Debeheni (which in fact runs in parallel to a large part of the ‘Offering Ritual’ in the Pyramid Texts).⁴⁵ This practice seems to have developed beyond mere ritual tabulation, however, as elsewhere in Unas’ pyramid the same mark – the horizontal divider cutting across a vertical text column – is used rather differently, to separate larger discrete sections of text, i.e. discrete utterances/spells. For example, there is only one horizontal divider on the whole of the east gable of Unas’ antechamber, a stretch of 34 columns (of uneven height). Most of this gable wall is occupied by the ‘cannibal hymn’ (PT utterance 273-274), which occupies 30 of the 34 columns on the gable wall. The only horizontal text divider present on the gable wall marks off the end of the cannibal hymn from the utterance that follows it (PT utterance 275).⁴⁶

From the reign of Unas’ successor Teti onwards, a more elaborate device can be used to mark off larger text sections: in addition to a horizontal line dividing the column, a small square is indicated to one side of the column, giving  (when reading from left to right).⁴⁷ Along with the vertical column dividers, and the top of the column, this conceptually outlines the shape

of the Egyptian hieroglyph GSL O6  writing the lexeme *hwt*, literally ‘mansion/estate’, but which is well attested in the New Kingdom meaning ‘section/chapter’ of a longer text.⁴⁸ Where they overlap, these *hwt*-divisions in later Old Kingdom pyramids often (though not always) concur with the simple horizontal divider found in Unas.⁴⁹


The Coffin Texts corpus has a number of ways of marking off sections of text in columns: principally single or double horizontal lines (either in red or in black) cutting across columns, and also through the use of the sign GSL G41  (again, in either red or black). This sign

bottom of every column. This was clearly the ideal, and was followed where possible (see e.g. towards the end of the first register on the north wall of Unas’ sarcophagus chamber = PT utterances 46-57). However, in the earlier section of the same register (= PT 23, 25, 32, 34-45), the utterances are longer, and so the ritual items are more sporadic.

⁴⁵ Hays, *Organization of the Pyramid Texts*, 86-87.

⁴⁶ The divide between the remaining two utterances on this wall, PT 275 and PT 276, falls across a column break, so there is no need for any further explicit sign as a divider.



⁴⁷ The orientation is not completely fixed, and the square can sometimes appear in a reversed position, as for example in Pepi II’s PT utterance 21, presumably influenced by practical considerations of the layout and orientation of the text on the wall; e.g. J. P. Allen, *A New Concordance to the Pyramid Texts* (Brown, 2013), II,


PT 21. Pepi II’s pyramid seems to use this more elaborate  device for divisions of larger text sections, while the simple horizontal dividing line is at least sometimes retained for more minor text divisions, such as indications of ritual acts/offerings within an utterance: see, for example, Allen, *A New Concordance*, II, PT 12A-17.

⁴⁸ See Grimm, *SAK* 13, 102, who also notes that the *hwt* divider is often pragmatically omitted, when an utterance ends at the bottom of a column. See also A. H. Gardiner, *The Chester Beatty Papyri, no. 1* (London, 1931), 27; A. M. Blackman, ‘The Use of the Egyptian Word *ht* ‘House’ in the Sense of “Stanza”’, *Orientalia* 7 (1938), 64-66. The actual occurrence of the term *hwt* meaning ‘stanza’ is not clearly attested before the New Kingdom: Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture*, 114.

⁴⁹ The textual transmission of the Pyramid Texts is notoriously complex, and it is unsurprising that some differences are apparent: for example, while Unas and Teti both concur on marking the end of the cannibal hymn, Teti inserts an extra break in the middle of the text. Since the later, Middle Kingdom, textual history of this composition suggests that it continued to be regarded as a textual unity, this either suggests that Teti’s division dropped out of transmission, or that the *hwt*-sign could be used for multiple levels of textual division (e.g. whole utterances, and sections within utterances), without explicit distinction.

can be read *grh* ‘pause’, and later evidence from the New Kingdom implies that it was then literally read thus.⁵⁰ However, the use of this grapheme itself may conceivably have been a

visual development of , given their slight visual similarity if one removes the vertical columns: .⁵¹ The use of these various dividers in Middle Kingdom coffins does not seem to be strongly hierarchically arranged (that is, with different types of text divider indicating text divisions of different levels of importance); instead, a given coffin prefers a single method of marking textual divisions. To take an example, in the sequence CT spells 1-29 (mortuary liturgy CT.1),⁵² some coffins are much more sparing than others in marking text division: some coffins regularly mark off discrete sections, whereas others are more inclined to simply run the text on with no sign indicating the change of text. When divisions *are* marked, there is generally agreement among the sources as to where in the text the divisions should be (suggesting a common ancient understanding of the articulation of the individual units, or ‘spells’ that made up the liturgy, rather than different coffins implying different

divisions of the liturgy). Some coffins consistently prefer one type of divider, such as  in either black (B4B0 and B6C)⁵³ or red (B4C),⁵⁴ or a double black horizontal line (B2B0).⁵⁵ Other coffins show use of multiple types of divider: B1P mostly uses double red horizontal lines to mark off spells,⁵⁶ but sporadically uses a single red line.⁵⁷ B3B0 instead mostly uses single red horizontal lines,⁵⁸ but sporadically uses a single black horizontal line instead.⁵⁹ It is difficult to discern a clear hierarchical significance to the more rarely used dividers in these cases,⁶⁰ and the possibility of copyist’s error, or, more probably, copying from multiple differently formatted *Vorlagen*,⁶¹ cannot be dismissed: it is important to note that the CT.1 liturgy originally existed in two variants attested at sites throughout Egypt (CT.1 A and B), as well as in a later combined sequence known only from Deir el-Bersha (CT.1 AB). Nevertheless, the variability in text dividers, both in terms of method and frequency of division, even among a closely related group of coffins from a single site (Deir el-Bersha) suggests that the appearance of such divisions was not a standardised part of the transmitted text, but was perhaps instead largely an editorial decision of the deviser/arranger of the texts

⁵⁰ Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture*, 114 n. 5.

⁵¹ Blackman, *Orientalia* 7, 65; see also the suggested understanding of *grh* proposed by H. Grapow, *Sprachliche und schriftliche Formung ägyptischer Texte* (Glückstadt, 1936), 53.

⁵² See J. Assmann, *Altägyptische Totenliturgien*, I: *Totenliturgien in den Sargtexten des Mittleren Reiches* (Heidelberg, 2002), 54-60.

⁵³ Occurrences: B4B0 CT spells 5, 6, 7, 11, and 14; B6C CT spells 4, 9, 11, 14.

⁵⁴ Occurrences: B4C CT spells 6, 13, 14, 23.

⁵⁵ Occurrences: B2B0 CT spells 5, 7, 9.

⁵⁶ Occurrences: B1P CT spells 5, 6, 9, 11, 14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26.

⁵⁷ Occurrences: B1P CT spells 8, 17, 22 (this last added apparently secondarily to the text).

⁵⁸ Occurrences: B3B0 CT spells 5, 6, 8 (subsequently crossed out in red), 9, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22.


⁵⁹ Occurrences: B3B0 CT spells 7, 16.


⁶⁰ In the cases just cited, the deviation in colour is not explicable as a switch to stand out amid the closing rubric of one utterance, and the rubricised title of the next, of the sort discussed by Posener, *JEA* 37, 79.

⁶¹ It is worth noting that similar kinds of text divider are attested on papyrus copies of the Coffin Texts corpus, for example P. Berlin 10482; see I. Regulski, ‘Papyrus Fragments from Asyut: A Paleographic Comparison’, in U. Verhoeven (ed.), *Ägyptologische “Binsen”-Weisheiten I-II: Neue Forschungen und Methoden der Hieratistik* (Mainz, 2015), fig. 4.


as they are found on each particular coffin.⁶² Finally, it should be noted that horizontal lines used as text separators in vertical columns of text are not confined to funerary/mortuary contexts, but are occasionally also found in letters, both to the living and the dead. A well-known Middle Kingdom example comes in Heqanakht letter 3, where the standard opening formula *b3k n pr-dt hq3-nht dd*, ‘the worker of the funerary estate, the *ka*-servant Heqanakht, who speaks’, is followed by a horizontal black line, separating it from the first person speech that follows.⁶³ This could be understood as the preposition *n* ‘to’, giving *b3k n pr-dt hq3-nht dd n <X>*,⁶⁴ with the name of the recipient omitted, but a similar line dividing the sender’s and addressee’s details from the content of the message is also found in one of the letters to the dead, the ‘Cairo bowl’,⁶⁵ where it cannot be read as the preposition, and so must be taken as a text divider.

As well as text dividers, the early corpora of funerary/mortuary literature also provide a number of further paratextual markers. From Unas onwards, the Pyramid Texts contain

frequent notations to  *dd-mdw*, ‘recite the words’, interspersed throughout the flow of text on the wall.⁶⁶ However, in Teti, Pepi I, Pepi II and queens’ pyramids it can also be used ornamentally at the top of every column.⁶⁷ These extra examples of *dd-mdw* cannot always be read grammatically as part of the text that follows underneath them in each column, and

hence  has in these cases become a generic frieze above the text indicating that the entire text is to be recited – perhaps somewhat akin to modern speech marks. This usage of *dd-mdw* is extremely well attested in later periods too, being often found with the Coffin Texts.⁶⁸ Other notations, found in funerary/mortuary literature from the Pyramid Texts onwards, may

⁶² H. Willems, *Chests of Life: A Study of the Typology and Conceptual Development of Middle Kingdom Standard Class Coffins* (Mededelingen en Verhandelingen van het Voorazatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap ‘Ex Oriente Lux’ 25; Leiden, 1988), 70-71, notes that dividing lines are common on coffins from el-Bersheh (B2-4Bo). It is notable that the examples of this CT.1 liturgy from other sites in Egypt show drastically fewer indications of textual division, with the majority running on without any indication of a break (e.g. BH5C, M.C.105, S10C, T9C, though T2C from Thebes does have a solitary text divider, marking the end of spell 15

with a red . All these coffins contain one or other of the earlier variants of CT.1 A or B. Thus the combined CT.1 AB liturgy from Deir el-Bersha, with its greater frequency of text divider, may represent a later development of concern with marking textual articulation within the liturgy.

⁶³ T. G. H. James, *The Heqanakhte Papers and Other Early Middle Kingdom Documents* (New York, 1962), pl. 12.

⁶⁴ So James, *Heqanakhte Papers*, 119, though J. Allen, *The Heqanakht Papyri*, (New York, 2002), 49, prefers to see it as a text divider.

⁶⁵ A. H. Gardiner and K. Sethe, *Egyptian Letters to the Dead mainly from the Old and Middle Kingdoms* (London, 1928), pl. VI.2. A horizontal text divider also occurs (in a broken and unclear context) in W. K. Simpson, ‘The Memphite Epistolary Formula on a Jar Stand of the First Intermediate Period from Naga ed Deir’, in W. K. Simpson and W. M. Davies (eds), *Studies in Ancient Egypt, the Aegean, and the Sudan: Essays in the Honor of Dows Dunham on the Occasion of his 90th Birthday, June 1, 1980* (Boston, 1981), 175.


⁶⁶ For example, in the ‘Offering Ritual’ as laid out on the north wall of Unas’ sarcophagus chamber (Sethe’s PT 23-171), the direction occurs fourteen times, usually to indicate that a particular utterance is to be said four times.


⁶⁷ Grimm, *SAK* 13, 102. For *dd-mdw* used as a frieze in Pepi I’s Pyramid Texts, see C. Berger-el Naggar, J. Leclant, B. Mathieu, and I. Pierre-Crosiau, *Les textes de la pyramide de Pépy Ier, I: Description et analyse* (MIFAO 118/1; Cairo, 2001), 289.


⁶⁸ For example, in the outer coffin of Gua, BM EA 30839.


begin to approach paratextuality; the most prominent of these are *ḥz-phr* ‘vice versa’,⁶⁹ and *zp sn* ‘twice’.⁷⁰


By the time of the Middle Kingdom Coffin Texts corpus, comments as to the efficacy of an utterance are sometimes appended directly following the words of the utterance itself (e.g. *šsr m3ꜥ ḥḥ n sp* ‘a true procedure (proved) a million times’).⁷¹ Most of these are clearly verbal comments to the text, but some of the notations are so abbreviated that they might conceivably instead be read as paratextual indicators of the spell’s reliability; the best possible candidate for this would be the comment at the end of Coffin Text spell 503 (CT VI,

89h [B1L]):  *nfr nfrt(?)*. This notation is similar to that found in magico-medical texts

(such as the later P. Ebers), where a single  (presumably to be read *nfr* ‘good’) can be appended in the blank space next to a treatment deemed particularly good.⁷² The earliest clear examples of this in fact occur in certain magical-medical manuscripts among the Ramesseum Papyri (P. Ramesseum III and IV),⁷³ where the main text is written in vertical columns (read

retrograde from left to right), with the occasional  appended either above a column,⁷⁴ or in the space to the right of the relevant part of the column.⁷⁵ These same two papyri also contain

further indications of this sort: above the column in P. Ramesseum IV B3 is a black , presumably indicating that the treatment below had actually been *ir* ‘done’ (or maybe ‘to be

done’?).⁷⁶ In a number of places there are also instances where these two signs, , occur together to the right of the column,⁷⁷ presumably indicating that the treatment was done, *and*

⁶⁹ W. Westendorf, ‘Der Rezitationsvermerk *ts-phr*’, in O. Firchow (ed.), *Ägyptologische Studien* (Berlin, 1955), 383-402.

⁷⁰ Grimm, SAK 13.

⁷¹ L. Coulon, ‘Rhétorique et stratégies du discours dans les formules funéraires: Les innovations des Textes des Sarcophages’, in S. Bickel and B. Mathieu (eds), *D’un monde à l’autre: Textes des Pyramides et Textes des Sarcophages* (BdE 139; Cairo, 2004), 139-140.

⁷² See H. von Deines and W. Westendorf, *Wörterbuch der medizinischen Texte*, I (Grundriss der Medizin der Alten Ägypter 7/1; Berlin, 1961), 460.

⁷³ J. W. Barns, *Five Ramesseum Papyri*, pls 10-15 (P. Ram. III) and pls. 16-20 (P. Ram. IV); photographs: R. B. Parkinson, *The Ramesseum Papyri* (2011), available online:

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/publications/online_research_catalogues/rp/the_ramesseum_papyri.asp

⁷⁴ P. Ramesseum III A3 (in black ink).

⁷⁵ In black ink (against rubric in main column of text): P. Ramesseum III A16, A32, B1, B7; P. Ramesseum IV C17. It also occurs in red ink: P. Ramesseum III A26 (against black text in main column); P. Ramesseum IV E9.1 (broken, so context unclear).

⁷⁶ This sign is also found as an administrative annotation in P. Boulaq 18, with reference to incense: Helck, *Aktenkunde*, 61.

⁷⁷ P. Ramesseum III A24, A27, B10 (all in black ink against rubrics in main column).


was found to be good. This practice is perhaps an extension of the use of individual hieroglyphic signs as ‘check marks’ in administrative papyri.⁷⁸

Remaining in the later Middle Kingdom, a few further paratextual developments can be found. The concept of numbering of individual columns of vertically arranged text is attested in late Middle Kingdom literary manuscripts: P. Butler verso, containing the *Discourse of the Fowler*, numbers every tenth column of text (the number being placed above the relevant text column), with numbers 20, 30, and 40 surviving.⁷⁹ Likewise, the Ramesseum ostrakon (arranged in sequential ‘pages’ of horizontal lines, with one list item per line) numbers every tenth item/line.⁸⁰ In a more administrative context, P. Brooklyn 35.1446 numbers every tenth entry in its extensive list of fugitives.⁸¹

Verse pointing

The later Middle Kingdom is also the moment when perhaps the best known early paratextual marker makes its appearance, the so-called ‘verse points’, or ‘structuring points’ (*Gliederungspunkte*).⁸² These take the form of additions to the main text in the form of red ‘dots’ added to the main text (which is in black usually) – the exact position of the dot in relation to the main text varies. In a few of the earliest examples, the main text is written in vertical columns (going from right to left), and the dot is beside the column, to the right. The earliest examples come from among the Lahun papyri,⁸³ and the papyri from the Ramesseum tomb.⁸⁴ They are used in literary, and possibly ritual, contexts, though the fragmentary state of surviving examples sometimes makes generic identification difficult. Their use in later, New Kingdom, literary manuscripts has been interpreted as indicating a form metrical scansion, though alternatively it has been suggested that the points are used more mechanically to divide up clauses and other smaller grammatical units, as an aid to

⁷⁸ An important link between administrative check marks, and these kinds of annotations in magico-medical

contexts can be found in the use of the sign  in both administrative lists such as P. Reisner I (see above, n. 31) as well as in magico-medical P. Ramesseum III B14 and Niii (above or against columns of text). Simpson suggests that in P. Reisner I the sign indicates some special attention to be paid to the entry; in a magico-medical context, it might conceivably be an abbreviation for a medical term, such as *h3i* ‘investigate/examine’, for which see von Deines and Westendorf, *Wörterbuch der medizinischen Texte*, II, 644-646.

⁷⁹ R. B. Parkinson, ‘The Discourse of the Fowler: Papyrus Butler verso (P. BM EA 10274)’ *JEA* 90 (2004), 87. The copy of the *Tale of the Eloquent Peasant* on the recto of the same manuscript may also have been numbered: see R. B. Parkinson, *The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant* (Oxford, 1991), xxi-xxii.

⁸⁰ A. H. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica* (Oxford, 1947), 7-8. A further example of column numbering may be P. UC 32106 (see below).

⁸¹ W. C. Hayes, *A Papyrus of the late Middle Kingdom in the Brooklyn Museum [Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446]* (Wilbour Monographs 5; New York, 1972), pls. 8-12 (numerals 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70).

⁸² For the latter term, see G. Burkard, ‘Der formale Aufbau altägyptischer Literaturwerke: Zur Problematik der Erschließung seiner Grundstrukturen’, *SAK* 10 (1983), 106.

⁸³ P. UC 32110G (vertically arranged liturgical text, discussed below): Collier and Quirke, *UCL Lahun Papyri: Religious*, 11, and see also Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture*, 116; P. UC 32106C (vertically arranged ‘*el-Lahun Wisdom Text*’): Collier and Quirke, *UCL Lahun Papyri: Religious*, 36, see also Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture*, 311; P. UC 32111B (horizontally arranged fragment of either liturgical or literary nature): Collier and Quirke, *UCL Lahun Papyri: Religious*, 38.

⁸⁴ P. Ramesseum II and the ‘Ramesseum Wisdom Fragment’.

comprehension.⁸⁵ It is reasonably likely that verse-pointing is a development of the Coffin Text tradition (discussed above) of using horizontal lines to divide texts; this is suggested by the occasional use of horizontal dividing lines (instead of the more common red verse points) in some New Kingdom manuscripts of the *Kemit*, and the *Teaching of King Amenemhat*.⁸⁶

The usage of verse points in the late Middle Kingdom manuscripts is already apparently quite varied. The *Ramesseum Wisdom Fragment* (P. Ramesseum I frame D),⁸⁷ although only a tiny fragment, contains two visible verse points, one of which apparently separates out two parts of a single statement (• indicates verse point):

[ir] n=f phwy • hm-ht-pw
[He who makes] an end for himself, • he is an ignoramus.

This would imply that the ‘verse points’ are here being used for very small parts of the text, potentially a smaller unit than a complete metrical verse of the sort argued for by Gerhard Fecht.⁸⁸ However, the loss of the immediately following words makes this far from certain.

The other Ramesseum example, P. Ramesseum II, uses red verse points very differently.⁸⁹ This manuscript contains a wisdom text (the *Ramesseum Maxims*) that seems to be based on a number of gnomic observations. Although written in horizontal lines throughout, the formatting of the text seems to have been altered by the scribe as the text was copied out.⁹⁰ On both recto and verso, the pages of horizontal text are very wide in relation to the papyrus’ height. The papyrus recto does not contain any red verse pointing, but appears to be written stychically, with each maxim occupying a single, very long, horizontal line of text, a method of layout which anticipates developments in sapiential texts of the New Kingdom and later.⁹¹ The verso continues with the same sapiential themes, and the first ‘page’ (i.e. the column of horizontal lines) of the verso is laid out in a similarly stychic fashion. However, here red verse points are added at the end of each lengthy horizontal line. The second ‘page’ of the verso apparently abandons the stychic layout, and writes continuous text, sometimes with a significant empty space left between maxim; in addition, verse points are added at the end of

⁸⁵ See discussion in Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture*, 115-117. For an overview of their later use, in the New Kingdom, see N. Tacke, *Verspunkte als Gliederungsmittel in ramessidischen Handschriften* (SAGÄ 22; Heidelberg, 2001), and J. Winand, ‘La punctuation avant la punctuation: L’organisation du message écrit dans l’Égypte pharaonique’, in J.-M. Defays, L. Rosier, and F. Tilkin (eds), *À qui appartient la punctuation?* (Paris, 1998) 163-77.

⁸⁶ Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture*, 73 n. 12, and 117. An alternative (or, more likely, additional) precedent might be the red ‘check-marks’ added to administrative papyri over the history of their use: Posener, *JEA* 37, 77.

⁸⁷ Barns, *Five Ramesseum Papyri*, pl. 2; photographs: R. B. Parkinson, *The Ramesseum Papyri* (2011), available online:

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/publications/online_research_catalogues/rp/the_ramesseum_papyri.asp

⁸⁸ As outlined, amongst other places, in G. Fecht, *Literarische Zeugnisse zur “Persönlichen Frömmigkeit” in Ägypten: Analyse der Beispiele aus den ramessidischen Schulpapyri* (AHAW 1965/1; Heidelberg, 1965).

⁸⁹ See Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture*, 116.

⁹⁰ Changes of format and text layout are well known for other Middle Kingdom literary manuscripts, such as the only surviving manuscript of the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*, and the Berlin manuscript of *Sinuhe*, which alternate between vertical columns and horizontal lines.

⁹¹ See e.g. F. Hagen, ‘The Prohibitions: A New Kingdom Didactic Text’, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 91 (2005), 125-164.

each maxim, and are placed on the imaginary ‘base-line’ of the hieratic text. The damaged state of the papyrus complicates an assessment of the length and nature of the text sections marked off by these red dots. Assuming that the only verse points in verso page 1 were those genuinely placed at the end of horizontal lines of text, hence marking off whole maxims, then some of these maxims must comprise multiple clauses, for example:⁹²

vso 1.5
[...]-ib s^cš3 kdw
sb3 qn r ms[t] bj(3)t
[... ...] jwn hp^rt •

[...] heart which multiplies characters,
a strong teacher will create virtue,
[... ...] the form of what happens. •

The same is true for the second, non-stychic ‘page’ of the verso, where one of the maxims is sufficiently well preserved to be confident that no verse points are missing:

vso 2.4
rh-ht hr (dd) sht=i
mi hm ^cm=f 3hw=f
sh.n ib 3h <r> rht.n=f
rh hr (dd) dd=i n m •

The knowledgeable man says ‘I will catch on!’,
like an ignoramus, as he swallows down his abilities(?);
and the effective heart has been deaf <to> what it has found out,
while the wise man says ‘To whom can I speak?’. •

Here again, the verse point is marking off a much larger, multi-clause section – an entire maxim or stanza.

Turning to the Lahun papyri fragments, the interpretation of their use of verse pointing is much more difficult, as the following examples demonstrate: P. UC 32110 G, written in vertical columns, has been plausibly suggested to be a fragment of a liturgy.⁹³ The following, discontinuous phrases that can reasonably certainly be seen to stand between verse points, include:

(first column)
• 3bh m nhs n imnty i3bty •
• united with the walking-staff of west and east •

⁹² Transcription: Barns, *Five Ramesseum Papyri*, pl. 8; photographs: R. B. Parkinson, *The Ramesseum Papyri*, available online:

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/publications/online_research_catalogues/rp/the_ramesseum_papyri.asp; the translation given largely follows that provided on the *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae*, available online: <http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/>; see also S. Quirke, *Egyptian Literature 1800 BC: Questions and Readings* (London, 2004), 187-189.

⁹³ Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture*, 116; text edition and translation: Collier and Quirke, *The UCL Lahun Papyri: Religious*, 11.

(middle column)

- *w3 t3w(?) r h3pt* •
- the wind is distant, at the storm •

(last column)

- *psd mj [...]* •
- shining like [only one word lost] •

These divisions could conceivably fit within Fechtian prosody, but this contrasts with the fragments of an apparently sapiential text from Lahun, P. UC 32106 C, where certainly marked off phrases include:

(second column)

- *n irr rw=i* •
- my escape has not been made(??) •

(fifth column)

- *m bw ktt* •
- as a little thing •

Here, like the *Ramesseum Wisdom Fragment*, the pointing seems to be marking very short phrases, individual cola, to use Fecht's prosodic terminology. Both at Lahun, and in the Ramesseum collection, there would thus appear to be considerable variability of usage of verse pointing in their earliest phase of attestation. Rather than being an integral part of the structure of these compositions, it is perhaps easier to regard the 'verse points' as practical attempts at aiding comprehension by the users of these papyri, who used them for diverse purposes. The use of 'verse points' as known from the New Kingdom appears to have developed later,⁹⁴ though even in that later period there still appears to have been considerable diversity in the way they were used.⁹⁵

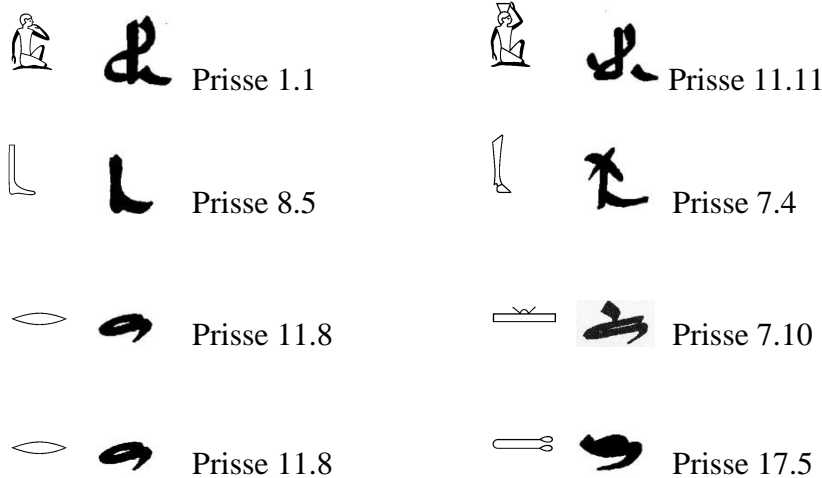
'Diacritics' in hieratic?

A final potential aspect of paratextuality to be addressed in earlier Egyptian writing is the case of disambiguation of hieratic graphemes by means of additional dots and strokes. Over the course of the history of the development of hieratic, there is a general tendency towards simplification of sign forms, but, as hieratic signs begin to resemble each other, there is a tendency to disambiguate them by the addition of extra dots/strokes etc. This process of differentiating the signs constituting the main text can potentially be considered as 'diacritic'. To illustrate




⁹⁴ Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture*, 116, points out that New Kingdom conventions appear to hold in *The Tale of the House of Life*, from the late Second Intermediate Period; see also R. B. Parkinson, 'Two New "Literary" Texts on a Second Intermediate Period Papyrus? A Preliminary Account of P. BM EA 10475', in J. Assmann and E. Blumenthal (eds), *Literatur und Politik im pharaonischen und ptolemäischen Ägypten* (Cairo, 1999), 190-3.




⁹⁵ As amply demonstrated by R. Landgráfová and J. Mynárová, 'Some Points about Structuring Points: Aspects of the Uses of the Egyptian Verspunkte', in R. Landgráfová and J. Mynarova (eds), *Rich and Great: Studies in Honour of Anthony J. Spalinger on the Occasion of his 70th Feast of Thoth* (Prague, 2017), 187-206.

this point, below are some examples derived from P. Prisse, the most important surviving Middle Kingdom manuscript of the *Teaching of Ptahhotep*:⁹⁶





Within Egyptology, these pairs of hieratic graphemes have traditionally been considered separate signs, and transcribed as completely pictorially separate signs in hieroglyphic text editions of original hieratic texts. In many cases, the distinguishing dot/dash/cross that disambiguates the grapheme may historically have developed from some meaningfully distinct feature of its original hieroglyphic form. However, this is less clear in the above cases, and from the point of view of a contemporary late Middle Kingdom user of hieratic, who may have had limited involvement with the hieroglyphic script, one might more appropriately regard the extra element of a disambiguated grapheme as a kind of diacritic.

This analysis of these disambiguatory elements as ‘diacritics’ is not perfect for the first two examples offered above, as the disambiguating elements of hieratic ,  and  may not have been optional parts of these signs (for the scribe who copied out P. Prisse, at least). By

contrast, the disambiguatory element of hieratic  is indeed optional for that sign, even within P. Prisse, which writes it as  at 2.4 (which, taken in isolation, looks identical to ). This strengthens the suggestion that the tick here truly could be a diacritic in some cases.⁹⁷ The process of using extra marks in this way to disambiguate hieratic graphemes

⁹⁶ Images derived from G. Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie: Die ägyptische Buchschrift in ihrer Entwicklung von der fünften Dynastie bis zur römischen Kaiserzeit*, I: *Bis zum Beginn der achtzehnten Dynastie* (Leipzig, 1909).

⁹⁷ The hieratic script of course tolerated high degrees of individual graphemic ambiguity, and the grapheme  could in fact be identified as being equivalent to many distinct hieroglyphic graphemes, depending on its

position and role within lexemes. The disambiguatory tick for  *t* has the added advantage that it rules out many of the more common possibilities for reading this grapheme. Rather less easily explicable is the occasional

appearance of this disambiguatory tick even in hieroglyphic texts, as , for example in the name of the 11th dynasty owner of the Stela of Tjetji (BM EA 614). Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 523, suggests that this was

accelerates in later time periods, but the above examples suggest that the process was already underway by the Middle Kingdom.

Conclusions

In the earlier phases of the Egyptian scripts, there is a comparative lack of evidence for a truly paratextual graphemic apparatus, compared with later Egyptian periods. The majority of developments that can be considered ‘signs’ are related to dividing the text into discrete sections. What appears more important for the visual conveying of non-linguistic information to the reader in these earlier periods is instead the formatting of a text: its physical layout on the monument/papyrus (or other text bearer), its horizontal/vertical orientation, and (in the case of hieratic) its ink colour. While nowhere near as highly technically developed as those of the Alexandrian philologists, nor even of the Egyptian scribes of the New Kingdom and Late Period, the scribal practices presented here suggest that the processes of entextualisation were well underway in the earlier periods of Egyptian history.

used to indicate words still pronounced as *t* rather than *t*, but it is perhaps more plausible that the tick added to the hieroglyphic sign represents the influence of contemporary hieratic scribal practice seeping back into hieroglyphs; this kind of process, whereby hieratic signs are eventually re-adopted into the hieroglyphic script, is well known for later periods.